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Addendum

UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM-WIDE SPECIAL
INITIATIVE ON AFRICA

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I. BACKGROUND

1. The March 1996 launch of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa was the culmination of efforts of the agencies and organizations of the United Nations to determine how best the United Nations system could support Africa's development efforts. The 13 priorities of the Special Initiative, derived from the Cairo Agenda for Action adopted by the African Heads of State at the June 1995 summit, are consistent with the recommendations of the major United Nations conferences and with UNDP goals of sustainable and equitable development. They also coincide with the original principles on which the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa (UN-NADAF) was established, thus providing the New Agenda between Africa and the international community with a mechanism for measurable implementation.

II. PROGRESS

2. A number of key issues were raised immediately following the launch. Concerns have been expressed over African ownership of the Special Initiative; the sustainability of the United Nations system vis-à-vis the commitment to work together; the insufficiency of consultation with donor partners; and the \$25 billion envisaged for the initiative, particularly in terms of negative African perceptions when compared with UN-NADAF. Although one year is too short a time to evaluate impact, some evidence is emerging to suggest real progress in some sectors.

3. The participation in the launch by the President of Ghana and the President of Senegal, the Vice-President of Kenya and the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, in his capacity as chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), set the tone of leadership involvement. Political mobilization efforts during UNCTAD IX, HABITAT II and at the OAU Summit, during which the framework of the Special Initiative was officially endorsed, underscored that leadership.

4. A number of Governments have since endorsed the Special Initiative, and institutional arrangements are being put in place for its implementation in many countries. For example, the Government of Ethiopia has expressed a willingness to be a major focus country in the priority areas of education, health, water and governance. Extensive discussions have taken place with Ghana, Namibia and Senegal. African Health Ministers at the September 1996 World Health Organization (WHO) Afro-Regional Committee meeting, embraced the Special Initiative as a framework for health-sector reform. Education Ministers, acting within the Association for the Development of Education in Africa, endorsed the Special Initiative, agreed to pursue the sector investment programme (SIP) approach and initiated a survey to assess the capacity of Governments to prepare SIPs. The Conference of Ministers of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) adopted the African Information Society strategy for greater utilization of information technology.

5. Consultations with African non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at different times over the last few months were designed to broaden and deepen ownership, ensuring that civil society organizations are fully involved in the

partnership, as intended by the Special Initiative. These decisions, taken since the launch, demonstrate positive aspects of African ownership of the Special Initiative. It is hoped that early progress will ultimately overcome scepticism and demonstrate the added value of the Special Initiative. The SIPs approach has become the preferred resource mobilization mechanism in education, health, water and food security. United Nations system retreats and workshops are planned to widen participation in the Special Initiative, including capacity assessments to determine individual country requirements to take full advantage of it.

6. The fourth meeting of the Steering Committee of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), held in Nairobi in April 1996, charted the path for improved United Nations system collaboration. Special Initiative priorities were clustered, and United Nations coordinating and cooperating agencies were designated to arrange for the implementation of each cluster. They were charged to organize cluster consultations, develop work programmes reflecting divisions of labour, agree on standardized reporting to facilitate easy exchange of information for monitoring and evaluation, and determine resource mobilization strategies. Through such arrangements, the added value of the Special Initiative was aimed at building programme coherence through institutional synergies.

7. The reports on implementation arrangements received from various clusters at the fifth ACC Steering Committee meeting in New York in September 1996, showed evidence of efforts to improve United Nations collaboration although it is recognized that much more is needed if the real value of the system is to be achieved. WHO and the World Bank, the coordinating agencies for the health sector cluster, organized meetings that reaffirmed the priority of health sector reforms and adopted a strategy for improved, equitable, accessible, cost-effective health-delivery systems on the basis of partnership. Implementation is country-driven, coordinated by a group chaired by the Minister of Health. These are important elements for the SIPs process. Similarly, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Bank, the coordinating agencies for the education sector, work together within the Association for Development of Education in Africa (DAE), a forum in which Governments, civil society and donors collaborate. Agreements have been reached in DAE to endorse the SIPs approach. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Bank, the coordinating agencies for the water sector, reported in several meetings the difficulties of data gathering. ECA presented an implementation strategy linked to the African Information Society Initiative strategy, and work is proceeding with UNDP to extend use of the Internet in Africa. On governance, UNDP circulated a framework document seeking to build a consensus around broad definitions and best practices, which is being followed up on by a mid-1997 forum, sponsored jointly with ECA. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank reported on the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, and some questions were raised regarding its effectiveness in terms of sustainability. The clusters on poverty reduction (International Labour Organization), trade access (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) and sustainable livelihoods in environmentally marginal areas (Office to Combat Desertification and Drought), reported on progress but are yet to provide full details on collaborative arrangements. On food security, for which the Food and Agriculture Organization is the coordinating agency, implementation within the

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clusters arrangements is expected to build upon the conclusions and recommendations of the World Food Summit.

8. The perceived divergence between UN-NADAF and the Special Initiative is being effectively addressed by the collaboration between Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries (OSCAL) and the Special Initiative secretariat, ensuring that the Initiative truly becomes an implementation mechanism of UN-NADAF. An approach to strengthen the linkages has been approved between UN-NADAF and the Special Initiative by UNDP and the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development. Recommendations of the UN-NADAF mid-term review have been aligned with the priority areas of the Special Initiative. Reports of the United Nations coordinating and cooperating agencies will highlight the recommendations of the UN-NADAF mid-term review and spell out measures to evaluate progress. In this way, UN-NADAF objectives will be closer to accomplishment.

9. Donor community support for the Special Initiative has been somewhat tenuous although the potential is considerable. It is foreseen that continuous advocacy in various international forums, buttressed by concrete examples of progress at the country level will eventually overcome doubt and scepticism. Signs of improvement include donor consultations throughout 1996; G-7 endorsement of the Special Initiative as a basis for building a new partnership; complementarity with the strategies of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD/DAC) as outlined in its publication "Shaping the 21st Century"; and positions taken by some major bilateral donor partners during the mid-term review of UN-NADAF. Donor support for SIPs in priority areas of education, health, water and food security, including at the SPA Forum, are yet to be fully implemented.

10. Programme coherence and resource mobilization are two fundamental features of the Special Initiative. The resource mobilization strategy must therefore encompass both budgetary and external flows. Government commitment to the priorities of the Special Initiative, especially for the social sectors, must be translated into adequate budgetary reallocations, comparable to the 20/20 concept. Existing resource mobilization consultative mechanisms such as Consultative Group and round-table meetings have been accepted as appropriate for the Special Initiative. A number of SIPs in education (Comoros, Ghana, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Zambia), in health (Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique, Sierra Leone), in water (Ethiopia, Namibia), in governance (Cameroon, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, Togo and Uganda) are in various stages of preparation for presentation to upcoming Consultative Group and round-table meetings. UNDP is utilizing the Norwegian Trust Fund for Governance in Africa for programme formulation and preparations for a governance forum taking place later this year.

III. PROSPECTS

11. The ACC Steering Committee meeting scheduled to take place in Geneva on 7 April will focus on the future. Emphasis will be placed on assisting the United Nations system to achieve greater programme coherence and institutional synergies. At the country level, where progress will have the greatest impact, the United Nations country teams are being encouraged to utilize the Special Initiative to accomplish greater harmonization and to build and retain capacity. To this end, United Nations resident coordinators in Cape Verde, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique and Zimbabwe are organizing United Nations country team retreats in the coming months to galvanize commitment for action, examining how best to integrate the elements of country strategy notes, country cooperation framework, country assistance strategy for the benefit of the various countries. Government and civil society organizations will participate in some of the planned retreats.

12. For countries in transition or facing special development situations, collaboration within the United Nations country teams is expected to facilitate the design of strategic frameworks for recovery. With a focus on peace and security, alliances between the United Nations system and the donor community are being structured to reinforce the strategy and to reach agreement on the allocation of funds from national and international sources.

13. Efforts will be made to streamline the Special Initiative with other undertakings with similar objectives, giving emphasis to follow-up to the major United Nations conferences, OECD/DAC "Shaping the 21st Century" strategies and the Tokyo International Conference on African Development process.

14. In order to encourage tangible results, targets will need to be set for each cluster and implementation measured over the next 6 to 12 months. The work of United Nations coordinating and cooperating agencies will need to be accelerated. Standardized reporting, monitoring and evaluation instruments must be put in place.
